

Std:VI

7.The growth of new ideas

**The ‘System of Ashramas’**.

 Around the time when Jainism and Buddhism were becoming popular, brahmins developed the system of ashramas. Here, the word ashrama does not mean a place where people live and meditate.It is used instead for a stage of life. Four ashramas were recognised: brahmacharya, grihastha, vanaprastha and samnyasa.

Brahmacharya – During this stage of life, Brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya men were expected to lead simple lives and study the Vedas during the early years of their life.

Grihastha – During this stage, they had to marry and live as householders.

Vanaprastha – During this stage, they had to live in the forest and meditate.

Samnyasa - Finally, they had to give up everything and become samnyasins.

The system of ashramas allowed men to spend some part of their lives in meditation. Generally, women were not allowed to study the Vedas, and they had to follow the ashramas chosen by their husbands.

**Difference between a monastery and an ashrama**

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| **a monastery** | **an ashrama** |
| 1. It is a permanent shelter for monks and nuns. These were also known as viharas.  2. The earliest viharas were made of wood, and then of brick. Some were even in caves that were dug out in hills, especially in western India. | 1. The word ashrama does not mean a place where people live and meditate.  2. It is used instead for a stage of life. Four ashramas were recognised: brahmacharya, grihastha,  vanaprastha and samnyasa. |

**Monasteries of Jainas and Buddhists**

                         i.        Supporters of the monks and nuns built temporary shelters for them in gardens, or they lived in natural caves in hilly areas.

                        ii.        As time went on, many supporters of the monks and nuns, and they themselves, felt the need for more permanent shelters and so monasteries were built. These were known as viharas.

                      iii.        Very often, the land on which the vihara was built was donated by a rich merchant or a landowner, or the king.

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**Main teachings of Mahavira**

                         i.        He taught a simple doctrine: men and women who wished to know the truth must leave their homes.

                       ii.        They must follow very strictly the rules of ahimsa, which means not hurting or killing living beings.

##### The similarities between the teachings of Buddha and Mahavira

 Similarities

                         i.        Both Buddha and Mahavira taught in the language of the ordinary people, Prakrit, so that everybody could understand their message.

                       ii.        Buddhism and Jainism were against to the vedic religion to large extent.

**About Vardhamana Mahavira**

                         i.        The most famous thinker of the Jainas was the Vardhamana Mahavira.

                        ii.        He was a kshatriya prince of the Lichchhavis, a group that was part of the Vajji sangha.

                       iii.        At the age of thirty, he left home and went to live in a forest.

                       iv.        For twelve years he led a hard and lonely life, at the end of which he attained enlightenment.

**Gautama Buddha**

                          i.        Siddhartha, also known as Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born about 2500 years ago.

                         ii.        The Buddha belonged to a small gana known as the Sakya gana, and was a kshatriya.

                       iii.        When he was a young man, he left the comforts of his home in search of knowledge.

                       iv.        He meditated for days on end under a peepal tree at Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where he attained enlightenment.